

SHOULD NEW YORK RISK A POLICE PARADE?

Permission to Hold a Crooks' Parade Later Might Be Granted the Underworld in Return for "Laying Off" While the Police Are Marching on May 6

By BOYDEN SPARKES

Illustration by ALBERT LEVERING

While the Streets Are Unsafe, a Police Parade Savors of the Indian Medicine Man, Who Makes an Elaborate Noise to Scare Away Evil Spirits

THE chain bolt is on the door, the window on the fire escape is fastened securely (in violation, perhaps, of the municipal fire ordinances, but in complete accord with Commissioner Enright's recent pamphlet), the Airedale has been given his ration of raw meat and gunpowder, the old army 45 has been reloaded, the steel bear trap on the kitchen floor by the dumbwaiter has been set. An inspection of closets, alcoves and the space beneath beds and behind portieres and clothes trees has revealed no intruders. It is permissible to breathe freely. Now, to work.

The matter for discussion is the forthcoming police parade. According to an announcement prepared beneath the gilded dome of Headquarters, the force will parade on Fifth Avenue Saturday, May 6. It is an annual custom. Probably the first one was held for much the same reason that an Indian medicine man would hold a tribal dance, to propitiate good spirits and frighten evil ones.

Possibly that is what is in Commissioner Enright's mind now. He wants the department to parade, horse, foot and guns, to show the underworld and these here interests just what a formidable body they are defying when they continue to blow safes, loot lofts, slug prominent citizens and (now we are speaking of the "interests") sneer at the police administration of greater New York.

If that is not the Commissioner's idea, then, rarely he must have some sort of a secret treaty with the underworld whereby all crookdom agrees to a twenty-four-hour armistice while the police march. Do the crooks leaders pledge their followers to a day's lay-off? We ask this, Commissioner, with the humility of Socrates.

For weeks and weeks before the parade the blue-coated enemies of the city's outlaws drill in preparation for this mass appearance. Since March 28 the men have been hep, hep, hepping daily in three armories. Men assigned to Manhattan and the Bronx have been rehearsed as merciless as chorus girls under the eye of Jake Shubert in the 71st Regiment Armory, at Thirty-fourth Street and Park Avenue, and the 69th Regiment Armory, at Twenty-fifth Street and Lexington Avenue. Brooklyn policemen have been doing their practicing in the 13th Regiment Armory, in Brooklyn. And the crooks? Ah, they need no rehearsals.

Captain Charles E. Scofield is the department drillmaster, and the cops that wheel and turn and perspire before his critical eye and coarse commands are well drilled when he gets through with them. Perfection is what he demands and gets. They are drilled by squads, by platoons, by companies, by battalions, until their precision would earn the admiration of the commandant of cadets at West Point.

Last year they moved up the avenue. Possibly they will follow the same line of march this year, passing a reviewing stand opposite Madison Square. Mayor Hylan will lead, wearing his glossiest silk hat. Then will come Commissioner Enright and all his deputies, regular and special. After them the chief inspector on horseback, with eight other mounted inspectors behind him. Next the Police Department's medal winners, and then blue-coated battalions, marching eighteen abreast. It's a grand spectacle, but as they march we wonder if they could hear any cries for help that might be shouted by distressed citizens of Flatbush, the Bronx, Morningside Heights or even, say, two blocks east, on Third Avenue? Well, for that matter, recall the case of Nicky Arnstein:

For weeks and weeks the department had been conducting what was spoken of as a nation-wide search for the husband of Fanny Price. Then, on the day of the police parade down Fifth Avenue was being cleared of traffic in anticipation of the marchers, Nicky came back to town and in an automobile rode down Fifth Avenue, and never a cop recognized him. Nicky halted his car by the Criminal Courts Building, cast a nervous glance at the cops across the street and then hurried inside to surrender himself to the District Attorney, and while he was doing that some unidentified person could it have been a crook? came along and stole his automobile. At that very moment probably the police marchers began to mark time in cadence with some "heppy" air, say, "Hail to the Thief!"

Now the question is, Where will the crooks be on May 6 this year, while the police are parading? Forget, for a moment, that old phrase "When cops turn out rogues have their due." Would a crook with the tiniest gleam of sportsmanship in his make-up consent to take advantage of a situation of this sort? The answer is "yes." The police parade is probably regarded by crooks as one of the breaks of the game. A kind of one-sided game, as it were.

But if Commissioner Enright has negotiated a treaty with the half world folks re-



WHY NOT A CROOKS' PARADE THIS YEAR?

Gem Robbers' Honor Squad, wearing its loot, passes the reviewing stand

speaking May 6 the least that can be done in return is to declare a twenty-four-hour closed season on criminals. That would be a fitting recognition of the chivalric forbearance of the twentieth century Robin Hoods. Then the crooks could have a parade.

In advance, however, every one should agree that for all members of the Police Department and the reserves Lady Godiva rules should apply. Not one solitary look! No criminal should be allowed by his leaders to "cut" the parade for fear of being grabbed later by some policeman who had seen him marching.

A parade of this sort offers a really splendid opportunity to the pageantry experts. The essence of the pageant is that all who take part are residents in the place and locality, that the costumes and accessories should be minutely local and that all classes and ages should share in a common enthusiasm for bringing back in the most vivid form almost

forgotten history, in which all should feel they have a common and equal part.

A natural pride in their own achievements on the part of marchers might interfere with the success of the affair as a pageant, but as a mere procession it would be splendid. There would have to be, of course, a Fagin float, a moving platform or stage on which would be represented a sawing, cruel-faced Fagin in his garret teaching children to steal. Some critics might object to a cruel-faced Fagin on the ground that he was a benefactor of the profession, a kindly, well-meaning individual whose purposes have been misunderstood by the lay, so to speak, world.

But if the pageant offered any difficulties there would remain all sorts of opportunities for making the parade a more spectacular affair than were any of the Liberty Loan processions. As a sort of tentative order of march it is suggested that a dope fiend glie

club singing "Jingle Bells" could lead the column down Fifth Avenue.

Next there could be an honor squadron of gem robbers, wearing their loot. Some of these, if the burglary insurance companies are trustworthy, could dress entirely in pearls as does Doraldina, the muscle dancer, and have, incidentally, a far more modest costume than she affects. It would be a pretty idea for each member of this regiment (Is that too many, Commissioner?) to carry a red, white and blue umbrella so that the sun's rays could not shine directly on their jewels. The flashing reflections would be a frightful strain on the eyes of the spectators and might seriously impair the future efficiency of the marchers themselves.

Fur robbers, all dressed to represent Robinson Crusoe, but in sables and seal instead of goat skins, should have a place near the head of the line. They would be hot and

uncomfortable wearing such costumes and should be spared the ordeal of standing in formation for a longer time than was absolutely necessary.

A similar consideration should earn a place near the head of the line for the surviving participants in the crime wave of 1873. These veteran crooks probably would be unable to march the entire distance in a lockstep, a strange and ludicrous marching method that formerly was in vogue in penitentiaries. Plenty of high-powered cars should be available. Modern crooks have little opportunity for learning the lockstep.

After them there should be a little relief from the monotony of marching men, so it might be well to have another float. This one could present a tableau showing a six-year-old Wall Street messenger with a satchel of Liberty bonds slung from his shoulder being lured into a candy store by a bond robber

who would identify his calling by a slingshot held behind his back. Some news interest might be gained here by letting it be known that a real messenger was filling the role of the six-year-old boy. This should not be difficult to arrange.

Now for the aristocrats of the underworld, the born criminals, the Barrymores of thugdom, the Lombroso criminal types: Just as General Pershing selected a regiment of the finest soldiers of the A. E. F. to march with him in the capitals of the Allied nations after the armistice, so those in charge of this procession might organize a division of hereditary criminals, all men with receding foreheads, wolfish eyes, massive jaws, prognathous chins and skulls without symmetry. With their long ape-like arms swinging as they strode down the avenue they would make a grand picture. They could march in solidly formed companies in the fashion in which the Germans used to attack. As the Germans rushed forward to be mowed down by machine gun fire their advances were referred to as waves. These thug marchers could do it like that. Crime waves, one might say. Still, there is an objection to that. Commissioner Enright might misconstrue such an arrangement. He does not approve any use of the expression "crime wave." There isn't any such thing, according to the Commissioner; New York is as safe at midnight as at noon.

The inside job workers, too, should have a place up among the first divisions of the parade. Marching in the costumes of moving picture butlers and footmen, with breeches, satin coats and powdered wigs, they ought to add much color to the procession. Most of these men would wish to get back to their places at the earliest possible moment. Business before pleasure, of course, and a dissatisfied master or mistress is a handicap to a conscientious bandit.

Second-story workers wearing rubber-soled shoes and carrying scaling ladders similar to those used by the Fire Department, dumb waiter shaft burglars and porch climbers ought to form a separate division.

A similar combination could be arranged with the safe blowers. They could be grouped according to method, the acetylene torch rowd in one regiment, the nitroglycerine school in another and the Jimmy Valentine touch system fellows in yet another. Ex-convicts throughout the parade might advertise their records with transparencies held above their heads. On these could be printed in bold letters "Six years in Sing Sing for loft breaking" or "I broke out of San Quentin to come here" or "Give me credit for two years as vice-president of Prisoners' Welfare League of Joliet." Similarly, the "fences" of the profession might get a decent bit of advertising by carrying banners displaying their rates, as "Half wholesale market price on silks" or "Quick market and fair prices for Oriental rugs" or "Bring your pearls to Whiskey Ben."

The parade should not be too long. Foreign delegations, such as Paris Apaches, should be limited. The Apaches should be invited to wear baggy trousers, wide red sashes and wilted caps. This portion of the procession could be made one of its most interesting features, with costumed marchers representing Philippine ladrones, Chinese pirates, Indian assassins. But, as was said, these groups should be limited. It would never do to let the impression get abroad that New York was a place where any crook could make a living. Home industries have not to be protected, and there is no high tariff wall against imported thieves.

There are two things more: Manufacturers of brass knucks, blackjacks and pistols probably would want a place in line. They should be forced to pay for the privilege. The money gained in this way could be turned over to the widows and orphans of the victims of the crime wave of 1922. The other thing is this: It probably would please the public and serve an ancient fiction if, instead of grading the marchers according to height, "dressing the line," as they say in the army, a tall robber invariably had marching beside him a shorter fellow. Victims of hold-ups never fail in giving a description of their assailants to the police to describe "one tall man and one short fellow." So strong a hold has this fancy on the public's mind that it would be a bitter disappointment to them to discover that crimes are sometimes committed by twins, similar in size and appearance. If such a pair ever does take to the highway, however, the crook nomenclature squad at Headquarters has a name for them. They would be the "gold dust twins."

The men of the Police Department are a most courageous body. But those men of the French army who decreed "They shall not pass" also were brave, though their leaders never got the idea while the Germans were pounding Verdun that it would be a good notion to take the poilus out of the trenches back to Paris and have them pass in review beneath the Arc de Triomphe. They did that when the war was over.